WHEN EAST COMES WEST

MINA·DEANE·HALSEY

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WHEN EAST COMES WEST

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BY

MINA DEANE HALSEY

Author of

"A Tenderfoot in Southern California"

"Needles and Pins," Etc., etc.

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This is an autograph edition of "When East Comes West," the number of this copy being 269

Mina Deane Halsey

Lovingly Dedicated
to
Honah
and
Honah's Own

FOREWORD

The first thing you are liable to hear when you step off the overland train is, "Say, what part of the country did *you* come from, eh?" And before you can shift your quid of chewing terbacca over to the other side of your mouth, it will be followed up with a good warm hand-shake, and, "How d' you like it out here, partner?" Now don't get any wrong ideas into your head, and think this smiling individual is a "bunco steerer" or some one who is just poking his nose into your affairs, for you never was more mistaken in your life, friend.

Like as not he'll take you home and feed you for a month—lend you some of his good clothes to sport around in until your trunk shows up, and if you need a job, he'll find you one, even if he has to give you *his* job, until you can find another.

He's a *Californian;* and when you get the real meaning of that word fixed in your mind, so that you can understand it, you'll know why they call this country the "land of gold." It ain't all in the ground;—it's the stuff the "angels" are made of, by gum!

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Don't ever walk into trouble with your eyes open—put on blinders and shy at it, Bill.

CHAPTER I

ROOMS FOR RENT

HONEST to goodness, Bill, I had no more idea what I was going up against, when I started out hunting rooms in Los Angeles, than a good-natured turkey has on Thanksgiving Day, when she sees a fellar with a smile on his face, and a hatchet in his hand, sneak up behind her.

A man on the train told me the best way to do was to rent a room or two,

and take my meals any old place. I must have found some of the "old" places first, and some were older than others, Bill. This fellar said there were two hundred rooms for rent in the Westlake district, and I must have got around to 199½ of 'em before I felt that I had had my money's worth, and took his word for the few I'd missed. I got back to the hotel somehow, but suffering Kansas!—my head ached, my knees had given out altogether, and my stomach rolled and pitched so I couldn't eat anything for days.

Of all the sights, and the sounds, and the smells, Bill, I ever had thrown at me, shoved down my throat, plastered all over me, in the sixty odd years I've been on earth, I found 'em that first day, hunting rooms.

There were sights in some of those rooming houses that old P. T. Barnum would have mortgaged his circus to have got hold of—there were sounds in those rooming houses that any first-class crazy house would have been ashamed of; and smells—well, I can't seem to find the right words to make it plain as I wish I could, Bill. Anyway, my stomach didn't get settled down and feel at home for over a month, and for weeks every blamed automobile that passed me, that had a smell to it, cost me the price of a bromo seltzer. I had to take so many bromo seltzers that some of the drug clerks reached for the bottle whenever they saw me coming in the door, and one fellar asked me if I didn't want to buy out half the business. I thought I knew just about

what I wanted when I started out hunting for rooms, but, by gum, I changed my mind worse than any female you ever heard tell of.

Why, Bill, you don't know enough to last you over night, after you've been through half a dozen of those rooming houses!

Fact.

I'll bet my mouth was wide open and my tongue hanging out by the time I got to the last place. I remember I was so "all in" that I said "yep" to everything the woman told me, and handed out $5.00 deposit on a room I wouldn't put my old shoes in, just to stop her talking and give her a chance to get her second wind. Why, she looked like she'd bust a bloodvessel, if she didn't stop talking long enough to swallow.

Bill, you never even *heard* of a "kitchenette," did you?

Well, by gum, *I've seen one*—yes sir, had to live to be 65 years old, to know what a "kitchenette" was.

No, you're wrong, Bill—they ain't anything like the kids get in their heads at school—nope—but I can swear that some of 'em was alive, for the landlady insisted on showing me just how much was furnished for $25 a month, and some things must have been thrown in for good measure, because she didn't mention anything extra for some of the things *I* saw.

Now, Bill, a "kitchenette" is a kind of a room that the fellar that built the house forgot to put in until after the house was finished, and then woke up and saw his mistake. So he finds a

ticket and rented a ten-dollar room, with a disappearing bed and a sanitary mattress, that humped up in the middle like a Parker House roll, and rested me just about as much as if I'd slept on the business end of a picket fence all night.

And I don't mean the kind of picket fence that has been whittled off by every good-for-nothing loafer that has ever rubbed up against it — neither do I mean the kind Willie and his best girl sits on by the hour, until the milkman comes along and wakes 'em up—no sir-ree, I mean the kind that will bore a hole clean through your hide, without begging your pardon.

Say, Bill, ain't this the coaxer, tho'?

TO LET—

"SEE SUNNY ST. LILIA."

"BEST PEOPLE ON EARTH."

"SEE SUNNY ST. LILIA."

Finest, Nearest, Brightest,
Latest, Cleanest, Sunniest,
Cheapest, Newest, Pleasantest.
Only hotel on earth with all outside rooms. (Unsurpassed, incomparable accommodations.)
Opposite Los Angeles High School.
NORTH HILL ST.
Call or phone Home A3344.
120 Finest Outside Rooms in City.
(Inconceivably advantageously located.)
Admirably arranged conveniences, free
Electricity, baths, laundry, phones, gas.
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Panorama Viewed From Our Roof Garden.

TWO ROOMS FOR HOUSEKEEPING.

TEN TO FIFTEEN DOLLARS PER MONTH.

THREE ROOMS WITH PRIVATE BATH.

$15 TO $25 PER MONTH

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Five minutes from Times Office. No car fare; two blocks from Courthouse; easy walking distance; fine residential neighborhood.

"Barrels of sunshine;" "oceans of pure mountain air." Cut out this adv.; worth dollars to you.

Now you know, Bill, I could be "shown" without any trouble why they call Pasadena "Heaven," and Los Angeles the "Angel City," but, by gum, after plugging all over town hunting rooms as I did, I'll be hanged if I can see any good excuse for tacking a "Saint" onto the best hotel that ever separated you from your money. Speaking of Heaven, Bill, 'pears to me this place makes Pasadena and Mt. Wilson look like grease spots down the front of your vest.

Ain't no use getting a crick in your neck looking for Heaven—like as not you just stubbed your toe on it, and didn't know it.

CHAPTER II

MT. WILSON AND PASADENA

THE trip up Mt. Wilson makes me heave a good many sighs to write about, Bill. In fact, I heaved so many sighs for a couple of weeks after that trip, that I had mighty hard work making anyone believe I had a good time. But I did. It was worth heaving sighs for a month to take that trip—you can't just exactly

see it that way, while you are on the trail, but afterwards—afterwards, Bill, when the sore spots have all quit their talking—when your liver has quit gallivanting around inside of you, and your floating kidney has been lassoed and trotted back into place—then, Bill, you begin to remember the beauties you saw with only one eye, while you kept the other one glued on the blamed jackass that was trying his best to give you all the extras he could think of for your money.

It takes four—five—six or seven hours to get up the trail, according to your mule, and it only took *me* somewhere around forty minutes to come down. Of course, most people don't hurry so on the down trip, but you know some things are forced upon us

in this world, and that jackass of mine certainly knew his business.

I don't know how to swear much, but there are times when cuss-words come kinder natural to a man, and I *sure did* surprise myself, Bill.

There were some wonderful sights all along the way, and the glories of a Mt. Wilson sunset, Bill, can't be described with a stub pen that scratches like this one does.

Nope—I'd have to be a school marm, and know the dictionary by heart, to find the kind of words to do it half justice, and then, your education has been so neglected, Bill, you wouldn't know what I was driving at.

They told me that a sunrise beat a sunset all to smithereens, but I didn't see a single sunrise while I was up

there, for about the time the sun was climbing over the peaks I was getting in my heaviest work and, next to eating custard pie, I'd rather sleep than do anything on earth.

Yep—I hope if I'm ever drowned, Bill, I'll be drowned in custard pie, the real deep kind, like mother used to make.

Mt. Wilson is the nearest station to Heaven yours truly ever expects to get. It's six thousand feet nearer Heaven than Pasadena is, but you can't make Pasadena people see it that way, even if you measure it for 'em. No sir, they ain't got no time to argue with any fellar with a tape line. Pasadena is the real thing, and you might just as well let every blamed one of 'em have the last word about it, for they've all got

their fingers crossed, and had 'em crossed so long, by gum, they've grown that way.

One day last summer, when the thermometer had stood just about all it intended to take, and had "rizz" up and sizzled over the top like foam on a glass of soda, I stood for two solid, never-to-be-forgotten hours in the shade of a spreading telephone pole with my fingers crossed, legs crossed, and, in fact, so cross inside and out, Bill, I didn't get the kinks out of me for days. I was *side tracked*, waiting for a street-car that the conductor told me was liable to be along almost *any* minute, now,—mebbe!

Well, the first car that hove in sight was loaded to the muzzle, and it didn't even hesitate.

The second kicked up such a Kansas cyclone before it got to me, that not a blamed soul on board knew I was there.

Bill, you know that playful little breeze that carried off the pigsty last summer back home, and scattered our pork all over the neighborhood—you remember it?

Well, the rumpus that street car stirred up on its way down hill had that cyclone fricasseed with mushroom sauce.

When I came to, I remembered I was only three feet from the sidewalk, but somehow I'd lost the points of the compass, Bill, and after hunting a long while for the sun, and locating it, I struck out for shore.

In my hurry I didn't find the curb,

for the warning toot of an automobile—sou' by sou'west—decided me to move on immediately. I made a run, and slid along the gutter on my stomach for a couple of yards, cleaning up in front of some woman's house without charging her a blamed cent for it, and when I picked myself up and tried to get my bearings, I'll be hanged if that same woman didn't holler out the window at me, "to keep off the grass—couldn't I see the sign!"

Now, Bill, you know there are moments when your feelings are so hurt you can't get sassy to save your life. Well, that was one of 'em. I was sure hurt, inside and out, and I knew my appearance was against me. I didn't *dare* sass her, for I saw a bulldog, with full-grown teeth, through the slats in

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the fence, and there was a policeman coming up the street.

I'd seen many a man run in on suspicion that looked a whole lot better than I did, Bill. My clothes had suddenly changed into a sunburnt, punkin' color; there was a hole big as my fist in one of my pant legs, and my shirt—well, Bill, my shirt was a good stand-off between a street sweeper and the hole in one of mother's doughnuts. But, by gum, I still had that dog-gorned transfer in my hand, hanging onto it like it was a life preserver.

I saw another car go by with a "Take next car" sign hanging in the front window, and one followed five minutes later marked "Special," but I had long ago lost all my interest in street cars, and wouldn't have flagged another one

of 'em if I'd had to walk back to Los Angeles.

Pasadena may be Heaven under *some* circumstances, but what I had occasion to call it that day was a shorter, more forceful word, Bill, and rhymed with—well—it was a long way from Heaven, when there wasn't any street cars running.

I found a kid and gave him a quarter to stay there and use up that blamed transfer, so I could get even with the street car company.

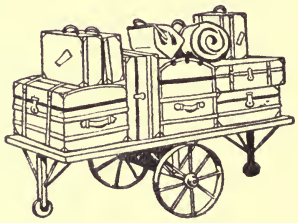
The kid was willing—he called it a "puddin'."

Mebbe it was—but I'd had mine, and I ain't stingy.

The only *real* thing I've got against Pasadena, Bill, is, that they have snakes in their canyons and no *sure remedy* in

town for a man that gets bitten—nope, not a drop, Bill.

"Lydia Pinkham's" and "Castoria" is the best thing they can do for you, even if you show 'em the bite.



Nature makes mighty few mistakes; now don't think I mean anything personal, Bill!

CHAPTER III

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES

SINCE I've lived in this boarding-house, Bill, we've only changed landladies seven times in three months.

Just as soon as I get used to one woman's biscuits, and manage to get my stomach trained down to her kind of cooking, she ups and sells out at a profit.

Mebbe the next woman that tickles

the cook stove don't know a biscuit from a door knob, and, by gum, after you've eaten a few of her kind, a package of hard-tack looks mighty good to you.

I'd quit staying here long ago if it wasn't for a little redheaded, freckled-faced kid named Bennie that has kinder adopted me, and tags along with me whenever he gets a chance.

He's a cute kid, Bill—out here all alone, and, by gum, he's so homely it would make the tears come to your eyes just to look at him. He's some relation to the landlady, and I don't know which has got the most to be sorry for. Says he's got to go back home to-morrow, poor kid, and he's cried so hard about it for the last week or two that his face looks like he'd run

up against a swarm of bees. Can't see his eyes at all—nothing there but the slits. He's promised to write to me just as soon as he gets home, and I've promised to send him a box of horned toads and tarantulas, so he can have some fun with the natives. Bennie says he's going to be President some day when the Democrats get half a show.

Mebbe he will—I dunno.

There's many a man that started in on a farm, and landed in the—poorhouse.

Speaking of farms, Bill—Southern California is one great big valley of mighty fine farms—big farms and little farms, all kinds of farms you can ask about are located around Los Angeles.

That may be the reason San Francisco people call 'em "farmers" down

here—yep, and sometimes they call 'em worse things than that, too, Bill.

Funny.

Here it is, one great big, glorious State; but there's a hump in the middle of it called Tahachepi, and a grouch at both ends—the northern end carrying the heaviest load.

That hump of mountains is just as much a dividing line of brotherly love as if it was a high board fence reaching clear to Heaven.

There ain't no imagination about it, either. This grand old State ain't pulling together any better than that pair of mules you sold me last summer at a bargain.

No sir-ree.

Los Angeles may have a few farmers browsing round its green hills, but they

don't keep their hearts in cold storage, by gum, and it don't make any difference where you come from, Bill, you're mighty welcome all the same.

Why don't they make two States out of it?

That's what many a man wants to know. You wouldn't find a tear in the eye of either one of 'em when the separation took place. Let this part still be Southern California, and all beyond the divide just "Frisco."

Then both of 'em would be happy as clams, and a stranger in California wouldn't ask so many "whys and wherefores."

In Southern California there are immense truck farms reaching out in all directions.

Flower farms—carnations, calla-lily,

sweet-pea and violets—acres of 'em, instead of the little old eight by ten gardens we have back home.

Pigeon farms down by the river-bed—where you can see one hundred and twenty-five thousand fluttering, flying, cooing birds any day in the year.

Ostrich farms—where the poor fellars start in an egg and come out feather dusters.

Alligator farms—where the 'gators start in, wiggly little "critters," and come out traveling bags, hand bags and pocketbooks; and frog farms, Bill, that are responsible for more cussin' than any cat concert your back fence was ever guilty of.

Frogs' legs are all right when they're *fried*, Bill, but they don't mean much to a man who needs sleep mighty bad,

unless they're served to him hot with melted butter and a stein of beer.

I ain't had any—I mean frogs' legs, not beer—since I came to town. Our landlady ain't lived in California long enough to know a dish of frogs' legs from a dish of stewed prunes—anyway, if she does, she's keeping it to herself.

She says prunes are awful healthy—*awful*—mebbe they are, I dunno.

But *I* ain't sick—except of stewed prunes, and I'm so dog-gorned sick of stewed prunes that my stomach gets right down on its knees and says its prayers every time a dish of 'em comes on the table.

You can't blame the wife who has been made to stand by use of a curb bit, and who has trotted in harness until she is wind-broken, for wishing she was a single footer, can you, Bill?

CHAPTER IV

OUT IN GOD'S COUNTRY

TELL me, Bill, where on earth could you travel one hundred miles for one hundred cents?

Nowhere, but in Los Angeles! And it's the most for your money you ever thought you'd get, too.

And let me tell you, some of those miles are worth dollars instead of cents to anyone on earth. Some of those miles along the glorious old ocean

would make you get mighty quiet inside all of a sudden, Bill, and before you knew it, you'd be thanking the Good Father for being allowed to live and breathe into your moth-eaten old lungs such air as only California is blessed with.

If there's a mite of "worth while" in your make-up—if there's an ounce of the "real thing" in your soul, it's bound to come to the top on a trip like this, Bill, or you ain't worth shoveling up and dumping into the dirt barrel.

If you can sit still and see that great stretch of ocean all a-glisten in the sun —if you can look up overhead and see a sky that's bluer than the eyes your sweetheart used to have—if you can throw your head back and take in a breath of air that reaches clear way

down to your corns, b'gosh, and tastes good all the way going down—if you can do all these things and a whole lot more, and not find a drop of water in the corner of your eye or on the end of your nose, why, Bill, you'd call Paradise itself Lonesometown.

Nope—there ain't many of us that don't get a "still" feeling inside of us at times, for there's a spark of *something*, clear 'way down inside of *somewhere*, that we all have to listen to *sometimes*, only it ain't allowed to talk very often.

We keep it muzzled or chloroformed until it's so little and frail that, whenever it tries to make itself heard, its voice is so pitifully weak we're liable to be ashamed of it, and choke it off with a "made" laugh.

Nope, I ain't joined any church since I got here—I'm only a traveler out here in God's country, and I'm just glad I'm living, that's all.

Bill, I wish you could raise enough dough to get out here before you die.

It would even be worth while to mortgage the farm and find out that there is something else in the world besides digging potatoes and feeding the pigs. You ain't done much else for forty years to my knowledge.

Your old woman ain't seen nothing but a sink full of dirty dishes and a tub full of dirty clothes for *over* forty years. Think of it, Bill, just think of it! She'd drop dead if you ever gave her one measly dollar to spend all by herself and forgot to ask her what she did

with it. Think of *that*, too, Bill, while you're dusting out the cobwebs in your conscience.

Life ain't *much* to a man on a farm, and for a *woman*—well, if, without knowing it, that old woman of yours got hold of the wrong ticket when she died, and finally landed in the place where you can't buy ice for love nor money, Bill, she'd only fold her hands, poor thing, and say: "Well, it's kinder warm here, and I always hoped I could have just *one* dish of ice-cream when I got to Heaven, but, no matter—it's a change, anyway, and I can get along somehow, I reckon."

When I took this one-hundred-mile trip, Bill, my back ached all day long, carrying around the big white souvenir button they nailed on us when we

bought our ticket. Why, Bill, that button was as big as an eating house biscuit, and just about as heavy. We started out with a hungry looking crowd, a good-looking motorman and conductor, and a "down-to-date" guide, that certainly knew everything that ever happened in Southern California, and a few things that even the oldest inhabitant had forgotten.

Here's the little "song and dance" he handed out to us when we started that changed a grouchy, dyspeptic-looking bunch of lemons into a lot of overgrown kids that forgot how old they were on their last birthday.

"Now, good people, this is the hundred-mile trip of a hundred sights for a hundred cents, and if you'll take the trouble to count them, you'll

see I've given you good measure for your cart-wheel.

"We're all out on an old-fashioned picinic to-day; we're all going to forget ourselves and be children again, and if we take a notion, we're going to eat peanuts and popcorn and drink red lemonade, and forget that our corns ache or our rheumatism twinges a little at times.

"We're just children at heart, every one of us, whether we're sixteen or sixty, and when we loosen up and see the fellow next to us doing likewise, we'll feel just as tickled inside as we used to in the old days, when we took hold of daddy's hand and started out to see the circus. Just one day of letting down the bars and romping in God's garden is worth more to us than many

a dollar will buy, and I want every one of you to say to the folks when you get home: 'Well, I got more for my money, inside and out, on "Tilton's Trolley Trip," than I've got hairs on my head.'

"Now, don't blush if you're bald-headed; just call it a high forehead to-day, and see how little you care about it.

"'Long as your heart is in the right place, and your smile's the kind that won't wash off, I'll guarantee to do the rest, and land you in the "Angel City" with a better opinion of yourself and Southern California in general, than ten times one hundred cents could buy anywhere else on earth."

And so we started out to see the sights.

We all gaped at the Giant Grape Vine, the "Jim Jeffries" of all grapevines, whose trunk (the grapevine's, not Jim's) measured eight feet around, and whose leaves were twelve inches in length.

When I tell you, Bill, they gather two and a half tons of grapes off this vine in a season, you'll think I'm lying, but I ain't. It's a California story all right, but it's a true one just the same.

I saw a fifty-year-old rubber tree that was brought out here a little slip in a pot, and now it towers over all the houses, and is worth losing your dinner to see. They told me they gathered two crops of rubber boots off this tree every year, and had now grafted it to automobile tires.

Yes, I know, Bill, it sounds kinder

"fishy," but I saw the tree—*crop had just been picked.*

We passed the town of Watts on the way to the ocean, and I wanted to see it mighty bad, I'd heard so much about it, but when we slowed up, there was an ice wagon standing right square in front of the town, so I missed it, by gum, after all.

This hundred-mile trip I've been telling you about is second cousin to the "Balloon Trip," another trolley ride that takes you scooting all over the country and brings you home in time for dinner. Why they call it the "Balloon Trip" I dunno, for it's all on land, Bill; nothing up in the air about it except the female that sat next to me in the car and growled all the way down and all the way back. I tried to

lose her after the first ten minutes, but she hung on to me like a sewing machine agent, because she said I looked so much like her first husband.

Since I took this ride I've found out why every tenderfoot that goes back East has to pay excess baggage.

Moonstones!

Yep—one of the sights we took in was Moonstone Beach, and I'll bet the only time I really ever got what you might call "loaded" was on *moonstones*, Bill. By gum, I carted round more than fifteen pounds of 'em in the hot sun for four mortal hours, and all the time I kept wondering what in *thunder* made me so tired.

When I got home and emptied my clothes, all I had left was a dime with a hole in it, and about a quart of sand

in each shoe, but I'll bet I had $4.98 worth of *moonstones* that would easy cost me $15 to have polished up in shape to be worth looking at—if you *liked* moonstones, and I never did like 'em, anyway.

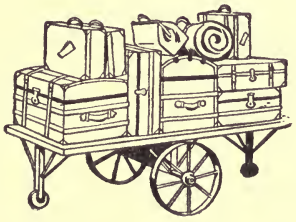
When you buy your ticket for the "Balloon Trip," they hand you out a little blue silk ribbon to pin on, to advertise the fact that you are a "Rube" to everyone who takes the time to gap at you.

After I pinned mine on, I felt like a "W. C. T. U." out for an airing on the water wagon, and the only thing that reconciled me to wear the blamed thing was the fact that the stops we made on the trip to the ocean were "dry ones."

The conductor told me the only way

I could get even a *smell* of "Here's Hoping" was to go in bathing, be taken with a cramp, holler "Help," and when they dragged me out, if I laid still enough for them to think I was dead, they *might* pour some of the awful stuff down my throat to be sure about it.

I had a good mind to take a chance at it, but our time was short, and the guide said he'd tried it once himself, and all *he* got was some Jamaica ginger.



Chickens always come home to *set*, no matter where they roost.

CHAPTER V

HOW TO SPEND YOUR MONEY

YOU know, Bill, when a tenderfoot lands in Los Angeles, it comes just as natural for every one of 'em to do the same thing the fellar did before him, as it does for a six months' old baby to stick everything into his mouth he can lay his hands on.

Yep, there are a lot of things in the way of "indoocements" in Los Ange-

les that I'll bet ain't been missed by a "show-me" since the town put on its first suspenders.

There's Mt. Lowe, for instance, a most wonderful trip, that every tourist who has the price just about breaks his neck to take, and when he looks up the incline and sees what a blamed good chance he's got of breaking it, he'd back out and go home, if he wasn't afraid some fool woman would laugh at him.

Then there's Chinatown, a collection of smells you would never believe could be gathered together under the blue canopy of Heaven. Why, after leaving the rose gardens on the other side of town, and dropping into this nest of pigtails, it's like finding a dilapidated piece of limburger cheese 'way

down in the middle of marshmellow sundae.

Marshmellow sundae? Nope, ain't nothing to do with a Methodist prayer meeting, Bill; you'll have to guess again.

They grow 'em out here; not Methodist prayer meetings, but marshmellow sundaes. Yep, they grow 'em on sody-water trees, great, big, juicy ones, with a cherry on top. But back to Chinatown, with its pigtails and punk! Why, Bill, I smelt of punk for a week after I went on that trip through Chinatown.

What's punk?

Why, punk is—er—punk is, well, darn it, it's just *punk*, that's all. Don't ask so many fool questions, Bill.

It ain't a bunch of honeysuckle,

b'gosh, I can tell you *that* much. Go out in the back yard and burn up a pair of old rubber boots—then shut your eyes and *smell!* Just as good as a trip through Chinatown, and a whole lot cheaper.

Here's a Chinese poem, Bill—*honest*—and by the looks of it, I should say the "chink" that wrote it was a bum writer.

Yep, I know it looks like turkey tracks in the snow back home, but it's the real genuine article just the same. Think of a fellar writing a love letter to his best girl and handing out a thing like that, Bill! Why, I can smell punk just looking at it. Fact; that poem is chuck full of punk to any one that ever got a whiff of it.

I can't read the blamed thing for

若尔意欲遊唐人埠
則請于下午三点鐘
或八点鐘到唼市呡
市打大飧館而見蘭
匿便可指引無悞矣

you, Bill, but, by gum, I believe I can dance it.

Then there's the Chutes—no shooting the day I was there—place looked like Garvanza on a busy day—game law must have been on. I bought out the peanut stand and filled up the animals, drank a couple of glasses of beer hoping I'd "see things," but nothing showed up, so I decided to wait until next Fourth of July and go out again. They say they have to hang the "standing room only" sign out on holidays, and I'd rather hang on to a strap in a crowd any time than to have the whole car to myself, Bill.

Then there's Santa Monica and Ocean Park—no prettier spots on earth. Born and brought up together, used the same soap, and wiped their

face on the same towel, but they ain't no relation, no sir-ree; they don't love each other worth a bean.

Then comes Venice—next door neighbor to Ocean Park; so close together they could have their arms around each other if they'd a mind to; but nope, they've both got a chip on their shoulder waiting for some one to bump into 'em.

But never mind. The old fellar that figured out how he could transform that cast-off land of bogs and slime into the beautiful little "dago" city he has, is worth taking your hat off to, Bill. They say he had an uphill fight from start to finish, and he ain't finished yet. Some few people down there thought they *saw* his finish, but he fooled 'em.

A man that will go through what he has "for his country" and still be able to smile is made of the kind of stuff that will wash without fading.

Then there's Catalina Island; that's another sure thing in the way of sights that every tourist takes in. That trip will flatten out your pocket-book and likewise your stomach, and do more fancy work to your liver in about three shakes of a lamb's tail than a healthy windmill inside of our diaphragm could figure out in a month and a half.

The water between here and Catalina has been up and a-coming since Time began, and if it ain't the *meanest*, *dog-gorndest* piece of water that ever picked a fight with a man, then your Uncle Eben don't know how old he is. It does beat the Dutch, Bill, how a fel-

lar will blow in good hard-earned cash, just to find out how it feels to wish he was dead.

Another beach is called Playa Del Rey; in plain U. S. everyday talk is just King of Beaches. I don't know whether its French or Dago, Bill, or whether the fellar that named it was just trying to see what he could do if they gave him long enough rope.

Anyway, I got a fish dinner down there that I'll remember as long as I live. Yes sir-ree.

Got a bone in my throat—that's reason enough, ain't it? Good dinner—fine—but I lost money on it, b'gosh, for that blamed fish bone went down with the first mouthful. I tried to get 'em to give me my money back, but there was nothing doing. They

claimed I'd spoilt the shape of the fish, and they couldn't sell it to anybody else.

I told 'em to go ahead and make fish chowder out of it—I'd give 'em back the bone just as soon as I could find it, but they was so blamed pig-headed about it, they said they couldn't see it that way.

I told 'em I had given 'em a mighty good idea, and I'd bet a barrel of hard cider the next fellar that ordered fish chowder down there *would* "see it that way."

Gosh, Bill, I'm glad I didn't order a fried egg, can't tell, might have got a *wishbone* in my throat!

The top rounds of the ladder are broad and secure—it's the bottom ones that are so blamed slippery, b'gosh.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT KEEPS THE POT A-BOILING

LOS ANGELES is the best lighted city in the world, Bill—this is pure, unadulterated truth, every single word of it.

Of course, there are some spots around the edges of town where you have to feel your way along the fences to be sure you're still on the sidewalk, but if you're sober, you'll soon get to

know just about how far you are from your boarding house by the "feel" of each fence, and if you *ain't* sober, every blamed post is a good old friend, reaching out a helping hand to you. By gum, I named every one of 'em, Bill, and many's the night I've stood and talked an hour or so with 'em on the way home. I got enough courage from each one of 'em to brace up and go on to the next, and before I had really talked all I wanted to, I was home. So you see, Bill, street lights are mighty fine sometimes, but there *are* times when the city seems to be wasting money. But Los Angeles don't count the pennies wasted, or the dollars either for that matter, whenever she wants anything and wants it bad.

No sir-ree.

A while ago they figured out that they wanted more water, and they wanted all they wanted of it, too; so, at a cost of $23,000,000, the "Angel City" will soon have a water supply that the rest of the country will get "pop-eyed" over.

And then they woke up to the fact that their roads were a little the worse for wear—kinder run down at the heel and frazzled out round the edges—so they voted $3,000,000 worth of good roads' bonds, and by so doing the country out there will have two more things to swell up over. Only goes to show how "big" they do things in Southern California, Bill, and that's just what keeps the pot a-boiling out here.

This town is the first bidder at the sale, and the last bidder too, by gum,

and when any town looks mighty wise, and kinder winks its eye, and thinks its going to beat her out, it ain't reckoned with the Angel City Booster Club. It's the biggest club on earth, Bill, for every man, woman and child that lives here (and there are over 300,000 of 'em) is an honorary member. I joined the second day I got here, and hope I'll be a director before I'm much older.

The "king-pin," Bill, is a fellar named—well, now, I clean forgot it.

Made me think of Rockyfellar the minute they told me who he was, because there was something about a "Wig" in it. Anyway, he's a dandy, and he's the one that kinder "sicks" 'em on out here, and before they know it, Bill, every man, big and little, is

barking so loud the whole blamed world is sitting up taking notice.

Fact.

Why, you know old Si Simpkins back home, the fellar that run for Senator, and didn't have any more show than a rabbit; well, he wrote me a letter the other day and addressed it——

Eben Slocum,
California,
Los Angeles,

and asked me in the letter what part of Los Angeles California was in.

Speaking about street lights, Bill, there are four or five streets in the Angel City that are even more beautiful than "Little Nemo" ever dreamed about. Looks like the town is dressed up for company every night, month in and month out. Miles of light, Bill,

miles of it, and it burns from dusk till midnight.

Kinder makes you throw out your chest to know you're even *boarding* in the Angel City, no matter if your landlady *does* turn off the gas at 9:30. She don't run the town, thank goodness. She's only a poor, weather-beaten down-easter, here to make a dollar. Lots of 'em bring their little stingy ideas along with 'em, Bill, but after they've been here a while, they get ashamed of themselves, and let it burn till 9:45 on *holidays*.

California is too big to live in and stay small—yep, even if you're broke. You've either got to warm up and hold out a glad hand to your fellow men or quit the country. Ain't no place out here for little minds and little souls,

Bill; nope, country's too all fired big.

The other day I cut loose from town, and got out into the great open country around Los Angeles. For months, every morning when I pulled up the shades and looked out over the housetops at the great wall of mountains that guards this beautiful fertile valley, I've had a hankering to leave the hustle and bustle of town, and just go over to those old mountains and forget it all.

Seems like they've been a-calling me all these days—seems like I'd known 'em ever since I've known anything—seems like they keep a-reaching out to me like a loving mother does to a tired child, and altho' I know I'm a long ways from a child, Bill, there's many a

time when a hungry feeling gets me, and I honestly wish I was just a tired little kid once more, with my old mother's arms wrapped tight around me. I'd make a pretty good lapful now, but I'll wager she'd be glad to stand it, if it was only possible.

Bill, don't you ever shame that kid of yours for crawling up in his mother's lap—let him crawl up there and be loved until he's so long-legged he has to wrap his feet around the rockers to keep from interfering. Don't you ever shame him, Bill—it will make a better man of him, and he'll be a better life-partner for some honest little woman, later on.

An old mother's love can't hurt any man on earth, Bill, no matter how old he gets to be, and when you find the

kind of fellar that turns up his nose at the truest love the Good Father ever put in the heart of a human, keep your eye on him, Bill—he'll bear watching.

Well, by gum, some "know-it-all" told me those mountains were only a stone's throw from Pasadena—only a stone's throw, mind you—just a nice little walk before breakfast—would give you a dandy appetite, etc., etc., but, thank goodness, I started out on a full stomach, Bill, or I never would have been here to tell the tale. I was so tired before I got even half way that I hired a kid to drive me up into the foothills, and when he said "Golong" and drove away and left me, I felt like a lost sheep a long ways from the feeding grounds.

But I wasn't lonesome—nope—kinder felt like I had father, mother, and all my relations just back of me, up in the canyon; and I shut my eyes, Bill, and dreamed I was just a little kid again, going fishing, with my mouth full of worms for bait.

But, of course, we all have to wake up, and I tell you, Bill, there ain't no use swelling up and blowing about how big you are in this world. Ain't no use of sticking your hands in your pockets and strutting around like a turkey gobbler, with all the gold fillings in your front teeth shined up like headlights on a behind time overland train, because it don't mean anything, after all, Bill. If you could just stand in front of that big rock pile, called the Sierra Madres, for a minute with me, it would surprise

you how quick you would shrivel up and look like a piece of lemon peel that some poor fellar had just slipped up on.

The longer I looked at those mountains, the more I began to realize what a measly, miserable, little shrimp I was, anyway.

Looked like I was just about as important and necessary to keep this old world going round as a little green worm I saw crawling under a leaf; and I had a pretty good opinion of myself, too, when I started out.

I sat down and listened to the birds singing all around me, and, Bill, mebbe you don't think I listened for rattlesnakes, too, at the same time, for Pasadena was the nearest town, and although they have a "Red Cross" drug

store there, there ain't a blamed drop of emergency medicine in stock.

No "first-aid-to-the-iniured" there, Bill.

Ain't it a *shame!*

If every gold brick was red hot, you'd still find men reaching for 'em with a shovel, Bill.

CHAPTER VII

COUNTING MY MONEY—MEBBE!

BY gum, Bill, I own more oil stock than that man Rockyfellar does. I've got stock in every blamed company that ever opened up, from Los Angeles to the City of Mexico. Some of it is paid for, some of it is half paid for, and some of it never *will* be paid for.

Some of it is mine, only it ain't—in-

stallment plan, Bill—and I'm going to let go of every share of it.

They're the only ones I *can* let go of, b'gosh; the others are mine for "keeps."

Why, Bill, I've got a bunch of oil stock that would choke an elephant, and I've counted up my money—on paper—and figured out I'll have just $3,333,333 inside of the next six months, if I don't wake up in the meantime.

I've looked for dividends so long, Bill, that the doctor says I'm liable to have *stigmatism* of both eyes, but when those dividends show up—well, like as not I'll send you a season ticket to California. Season's good the year round out here, so I'll bet you'll work that ticket till it hollers "help." If everything these oil fellars tell me works out according to schedule, mebbe I'll send a

special train back there for you and the old woman. Kinder surprise you folks back there to hear of your Uncle Eben buying out the Southern Pacific and taking a mortgage on the Santa Fé, wouldn't it?

That's what some of these oil fellars reckon I'll be doing before very long.

Mebbe I will, I dunno.

The production of oil in California amounts to over $50,000,000 a year, Bill. Looks like some fellars out here ought to be able to smoke two-bit cigars, don't it?

Say, did I ever look like a "Rube" to you—*honest?*

Sometimes I kinder wonder how these fellars knew I'd be so easy, and come and camped right down side of me until every blamed thing I had left

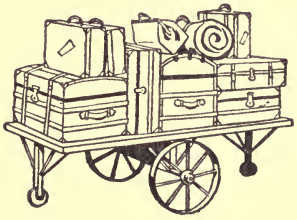
in my jeans was a horse-chestnut and a suspender button. Still, it's worth a lot to have some fellar, with a diamond in his shirt front that is big enough to stop a freight train, slap you on the back and call you "Colonel." Makes other folks open their eyes and think you're somebody when, 'way down inside of you, you know mighty well you're just a d— fool.

Of course, I got in on the ground floor, Bill, but sometimes I believe I was what they call a "skinch" out here. I never have asked anybody what a "skinch" was, but I'll bet it ain't anything to pin a medal on you for.

That little freckled faced Bennie told me his father had four medals for bravery, but said his mother told the woman next door that his father bought 'em at

a secondhand store for two bits apiece.

Poor little kid! he used to tell me he wished his mother was a "widder," so I could be his father. After reading the letter I got from him yesterday, chances ain't so slim as they might be. I'll send it on for you to read; handle it gently, Bill. Some day I'm going to put it on the market as a sure cure for the grouch.



Ain't no use stickin' your troubles in my pocket, Bill—I've got a hole in it.

CHAPTER VIII

BENNIE'S LETTER

DEER UNKLE EBBIN:—

My Pa seys: "Wimmen is awful funny critters," an' Ma seys: "Same ter you, you old lobster."

Now, I never can find out why Ma calls Pa "lobster"; I ast him onct, an' gee! I got a dandy lickin' fer it, so I ain't found out yet.

I heard a man call my Pa a "sucker" onct, too, and, after he'd forgot about

it, I sed: "Pa, is a sucker a fish?" an' he sed,

"Um-Hum!"

And I sed: "Pa, is a lobster a fish?" an' he sed,

"Kinder."

And I looked him over mighty hard, and I sed: "Why do folks take you for a lobster or a sucker, Pa? You don't look fishy."

Chrickity! I got the awfullest whalin' that day you ever heard tell of, so I ain't found out yet.

But I know it don't mean same as if some one called you a peach, 'cause I heard Pa call a waitress in an eat-shop a peach onct, an' she laffed, and her face got red all over.

Pa's face gits red all over when Ma calls him a lobster or a sucker; but I

ain't never seen him laff onct when she seys it. He always breathes hard, like a wind-broke hoss, and snorts and paws round till I git my Sunday-school lesson and study like blazes; 'cause I ain't forgot the whalin' I got for talkin' about lobsters.

Pa seys: "Children can be seen without their talkin'-machines goin'," an' when he seys that, I know he means bizness, and it ain't no time to ast questions.

One thing, I betcher-life, the kind of sucker Pa is ain't nothin' like the all-day suckers you buy at the candy-store for a cent. Onct I ast Pa for a cent, an' he ast me what I was goin' to buy with it. When I told him I was goin' to buy an all-day sucker, he took the cent back again, an' sed there was

too darned many suckers in the family already without buyin' 'em. Told me to go an' chew a piece of straw out'n the broom—taste jest as good, and better for my stummick.

Ma seys Pa forgits when he was a kid. Gee! I'll bet Pa was a mean cuss when he was a boy! Wish't I'd been big when he was little—I'd sure licked the stuffin' out of him for sum of the lickin's he's given to me since then.

I heard Ma say onct he was always a red-headed, freckled-faced lobster, even when he was a kid, and he hain't never got over it. Said his nose always needed wipin', too. Gee! he boxes my ears when *my* nose is runnin', and it's only just plain water, mine is, too—never drops off, 'cause I always catch it on my sleeve just as it's going to.

Me and Skinny Duff run a race one day at school last winter, jest to see which could hold a drop on the end of his nose longest.

I beet.

Skinny got to laffin' and joggled his so it dropped off. I kinder felt sorry for him, 'cause his best girl was watchin' us, and wanted him to beet. She bet her chewin'-gum with another girl he'd beet, but you see I had him beet 'way before we started, 'cause Skinny's nose turns up and mine hooks over, so, you see, when Skinny's drop started to drop, it dropped suddent like, but mine held on fine and dandy.

Skinny's girl hated to lose her gum like thunder, 'cause she sed she'd had it ever since school begun, and that was five months ago. Gee! I bet the 'lastic

was all gone out of it! I told her when I made some pond-lily money in the summer I'd buy her another hunk, if she wouldn't go and blab it to Skinny, 'cause Skinny's Pa is a p'liceman, and I'd ruther not mix up with him, 'cause he knows my Pa—*sure*, he's brought my Pa home lots of nites when Pa's hed bothered him, or when he found him layin' in the gutter, sick. Ma tells me Pa has spells—dizzy spells, she calls 'em, and she shoos me off to bed when he's got a spell on—always seys she don't want me to catch it—might be *small-pox*, or sumthin' worse.

I seen him jest onct with a spell on. Ma sed he was asleep—I thought he was dead, he looked so to me; but Ma sed I didn't know as much as I would sum day.

Whenever he's brot home in a spell, Ma gits him on the bed, goes through his pockits, pulls down the blinds, and seys: "There! sleep it off, you old bat." Then she goes out and slams the door. Ma is awful hard-hearted, Ma is, but Pa is *so* sick he never knows anything about it.

Skinny and me are goin' to race again for a bag of marbles, soon as I can catch cold. Skinny is always ready for a race, 'cause he's got the cattarr so bad all the time that he always has a drop waitin' on the end of his nose. He's been layin' for me all winter; but my Ma made me put on underdrawers, an' I ain't had the nose-run since.

Pa says Ma's highfalutin'. She ain't either, and he knows it. She's Piska-bull, Ma is, 'cause I went with her down

to the church when they gave her the soakin' that made her one. Pa's forgitful, Pa is; he ought to remember the day she was made Piskabull, 'cause he went to a cock-fight over in Buddy Hawes' barn that mornin', and he hollered so loud the cops pinched the whole bunch.

Ma passed Pa when she cum out of church—made Piskabull—an' she was feeling mighty sticked up about it 'till she saw Pa ridin' down the street in the control wagon. Pa had to carry the rooster in his lap, and was ridin' on the front seat with a cop on each side of him. Pa blue his nose, tryin' to hide his face, but he couldn't fool Ma on his bald hed.

Ma sed: "There's that old carrot-top of mine gettin' a free ride." Gee!

Ma's got more pet names for my Pa than I can remember. She ain't soft, Ma ain't. She never seys, "Deer and Darlin'," like Percy Brown's Ma does to *his* Pa. Nope—just lobster, or sucker, or goat—see, straight from the shoulder, Ma is. Pa always understands Ma fine.

It's jest like play-actin' when Pa and Ma spend the evenin' together, but they send me off to bed when it's jest about time for the scrappin' to begin.

Gee! I wish't I was a fly, so's I could lite on the ceiling and pretend not to be lookin'. Nope—I ruther be a hornet, so I could sting 'em if they got too gay with me.

There's a new fellar down to our school that fites like a hornet.

Gee! That feller can fite! But he

skins out of everything 'cause he's an orfin. *What's* an orfin? Wish't I was one, you bet. If he lies, he don't get stood in the corner same as us fellars do, 'cause he's an orfin. When he chucks spit-balls into a fellar's eye, he don't get a lickin' for it, 'cause he's an orfin.

Teacher pets him and helps him with his lessons, always sayin': "Bless his poor little orfin hart." *What's* an orfin hart? By Jimminy! I wish't I had one! Pa's got a terbecca hart, doctor seys; but Pa seys its a dam lie—seys Ma put the doctor up to sayin' so, so's he'd quit smokin'. So an orfin hart ain't got nothin' to do with a terbacca hart—nope—anyway, wish't I had one. I'm goin' to ast Pa sum day when he's feelin' good to let me be an orfin.

Buck Beans, that lives next door, told his Pa I wanted to be an orfin, and his Pa sed he'd bet I'd be a *half* orfin 'fore long, if the corn juice held out.

Buck Beans is awful jealous of us anyway, 'cause we've got a morgige on our house, and all he's got on his is a bay winder. I'd ruther have a morgige on our house .than a little old bay winder—it costs more, and Pa seys its harder to git. Buck's Pa don't speak to my Pa, and his Ma don't look at my Ma. They are so sticked up, Ma seys, 'cause they've got an ottermobeel and a chiffonier.

Gee! Bet we could have a dozen ottermobeels and chiffoniers if we wanted 'em. Pa seys Ma's afraid the ottermobeel will run away with her,

and Ma seys Pa is afraid she'll run away with the chiffonier; so we all ride on the street car when we've got the price.

P. S.—The only rides I ever git on anything is hookin' on behind.

P. S.—P. S.—I'm in bed to-day, an' I haf ter lay on my stummick, 'cause I ast Pa last night to let me be an orfin, an' he licked the *day-lights* out of me! So I ain't found out yet.

Say! What *is* an orfin?

Yours, awful trooly,

Bennie.

THE END

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